

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-05 MCT-01 IO-13 ACDA-12

TRSE-00 /110 W

-----092559 221249Z /70

R 211246Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6046

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY SANA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 6097

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJECT: ERITREAN SITUATION

REF: (A) ADDIS ABABA 5911; (B) ADDIS ABABA 6071

SUMMARY: PMAC VICE-CHAIRMAN LT COL ATNAFU ABATE RETURNED FROM ERITREA OCT 20 AFTER MONTH-LONG STAY IN APPARENT EFFORT TO BOOST ETHIOPIAN TROOP MORALE AND BETTER COORDINATE SOME OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST INSURGENTS. INITIAL ETHIOPIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS PRIOR TO ATNAFU VISIT MAY HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS BUT NOW APPEAR TO BE BOGGED DOWN. RELIABLE SOURCE STATED VITAL MASSAWA-ASMARA ROAD INTERDICTED BY INSURGENTS WEEK AGO (OCT 13) REMAINS CLOSED. END SUMMARY.

1. CONTRARY TO SPECULATION ATNAFU WAS UNDER DETENTION BY 2ND
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DIVISION, IT NOW APPEARS HE TOOK ACTIVE ROLE IN ETHIOPIAN EFFORTS TO REVERSE MILITARY TREND IN ERITREA, RETURNING TO ADDIS OCT 20. DURING PAST WEEK ETHIOPIAN MEDIA DEVOTED EXTENSIVE PHOTO AND WRITTEN COVERAGE TO ATNAFU STAY IN ERITREA, INCLUDING VISITS TO BARENTU, ADI CAIEH, NORTHERN TIGRE PROVINCE, AND DAHLAK ISLANDS.

2. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCE, ENORMOUS COMBINED ETHIOPIAN FORCE OF REGULAR TROOPS, MILITIA, FLAME COMMANDOS (POSSIBLY 20-25,000 MEN) WITH ARMOR, ARTILLERY, AND FEW AIRCRAFT BEGAN MAJOR OPERATION FROM TIGRE PROVINCE 6-7 WEEKS AGO. FORCE APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED IN ENTERING ERITREA AND RECAPTURING ADI CAIEH, BUT HAS REPORTEDLY BOGGED DOWN JUST NORTH OF TOWN. ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTED ATNAFU ATTEMPTED TO LEAD TROOPS FROM ASMARA TO RECAPTURE DECAMARE ON THREE OCCASIONS, ALL UNSUCCESSFUL, WITH FURTHEST EFFORT 13 KMS OUTSIDE OF ASMARA. VARIOUS SOURCES REPORT ETHIOPIANS HAVE INCURRED HEAVY PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL LOSSES IN THESE OPERATIONS BUT REMAIN DETERMINED.

3. IT NOW RELIABLY CONFIRMED MASSAWA-ASMARA ROAD INTERDICTED OCT 13 AND NOT YET RE-OPENED. SOURCES REPORT CONVOY LEFT MASSAWA WITH POSSIBLY AS MANY AS 120 VEHICLES INCLUDING 40 FUEL TANKERS, AND WAS AMBUSHED 19 KMS FROM ASMARA WITH RESULTANT HEAVY LOSSES. (THIS SIMILAR TO ITALIAN AMBASSADOR'S STORY REFTEL (B), BUT EXTENT OF LOSSES NOT YET DETERMINED AND WE REMAIN DOUBTFUL IT ENTIRE CONVOY.) ONE SOURCE STATED SKEPTICALLY THAT PERHAPS 40 VEHICLES DESTROYED, 4 ARMORED VEHICLES CAPTURED AND "MANY" TROOPS KILLED AND CAPTURED. THOSE CAPTURED ALLEGEDLY TAKEN TO KEREN. OPERATION CONDUCTED BY EPLF, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE LARGE AMOUNTS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN CONVOY. EFFECT ON ASMARA NOT YET KNOWN.

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4. COMMENT: SPECULATION IS THAT INSURGENTS COULD BE BEGINNING MAJOR PUSH TO ISOLATE ASMARA. APPARENTLY ERITREANS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COUNTER ETHIOPIAN OPERATIONS EFFECTIVELY SO FAR AND MAY BE SEIZING INITIATIVE AT TIME WHEN PMAC PRESSED ON VARIOUS FRONTS. END OF RAINY SEASON AND HARVEST HAVE SIGNED INCREASED GUERRILLA ACTIVITY BEFORE AND MAY NOW ALSO. TIENKEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, COMBAT OPERATIONS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ADDIS06097
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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SAS ID: 839333
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ERITREAN SITUATION
TAGS: PINS, MILI, ET
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